

## LIVING IN NICARAGUA



## Security

While statistically the safest country in Central America, Nicaragua's current crime threat level is "Critical." Violent crime in Managua is increasing and street crimes, including robbery and pick pocketing, are common. The Embassy has no information to indicate that official or private U.S. travelers to Nicaragua are specifically targeted for terrorist or criminal activity. There is however, a continuing risk of random criminal activity. Public bus transportation and walking within the city should be done with a lot of caution. The Cultural Section can provide with a list of recommended taxi companies. Travel to certain areas of the country, especially in rural areas of the eastern departments, may involve significant security risks. Travel to these areas must be approved in advance by the embassy's Regional Security Officer (RSO).

The Cultural Section will arrange a security briefing for the U.S. students and scholars. Any security-related incidents should be reported immediately to the RSO at 505-2252-7136 or [RSO\\_Managua@state.gov](mailto:RSO_Managua@state.gov). After hours, contact the Marine Security Guard on Post 1 at 505-2252-7171.

## Health

Hospital facilities in Managua are acceptable for many outpatient purposes and one, Hospital Metropolitano Vivian Pellas, meets U.S. standards for trauma care. The hospital's website is: <http://www.metropolitano.com.ni/>.

The Embassy has a list of approved doctors who speak English. Laboratory facilities and diagnostic tests are available. Emergency surgery and stabilization can be done adequately. The list can be provided upon arrival.

Adequate dental services are available in Nicaragua, including general dentistry, endodontic and orthodontics. Adequate basic ophthalmology services are also available. However, the quality of local lens manufacturers is inconsistent and they are not able to make complicated lenses.

Prescription eyewear is more expensive in Nicaragua than in the United States. It is best to bring an extra pair of lenses with you. Sunglasses are strongly recommended.

Tap water in Managua is not potable. Bottled water is needed, but can be purchased in any market place. Local water is safe for bathing.

## **Activities and Special Interests**

It can be a little challenging, but there really is a lot to do in Managua and in Nicaragua. Outdoor activities such as hiking and beaches are plentiful. Museums and traditional “cultural” activities are fewer and far between. However, Managua does boast a world class theater “Teatro Ruben Dario.”

There are many gym options, but few are air conditioned. Tennis and racquetball are quite popular and courts are not tough to find. There is one golf course in Managua called the Nejapa Golf and Country Club. Please visit their website here for more information [www.nejapagolfclub.com](http://www.nejapagolfclub.com). There are other golf courses located at some of the beach resorts (outside of Managua) including Gran Pacifica Beach and Golf Resorts [www.granpacificacom](http://www.granpacificacom) and Hacienda Iguana Golf & Beach Club [www.haciendaiguana.com](http://www.haciendaiguana.com).

Managua has many modern, pleasant “VIP style” movie theaters that show some recent releases from the US at about the same time as in the States. There is a very wide range of dining choices all over the city offering menus in all price ranges. For less adventurous eaters, American fast food chains (McDonald’s, Burger King, Papa John’s, Sbarro, Pizza Hut, Dominos) and restaurants (TGI Friday’s) are numerous and offer a familiar dining experience.

Managua offers very few parks or green spaces and a few libraries. The most accessible is at Banco Central de Nicaragua where there is an American Corner. American Corners serve as regional resource centers for information and programs highlighting American culture, history, current events, and government. American Corners typically host discussion groups, seminars, digital video conferencing (DVCs), poster exhibits, and meetings with U.S. and local specialists on a wide range of American-focused topics. They act as a regional repository for the use of American-themed books, videos, DVDs, and CD-ROMs and provide free internet access and educational materials.

## **Weather**

The climate in Nicaragua is tropical. There are two seasons: dry (“verano”) from December to April and rainy (“invierno”) from May to November. During the dry season it is hot (90s F) and extremely dusty, although the evenings can be nice and cool (70s F). People with allergies tend to have some sinus problems because of all the dust. Many people escape Managua during the dry season for the cooler climate of the mountains or to the beaches. During the rainy season, it rarely rains all day but sudden electrical storms hit frequently. Flash floods are common and can make getting around difficult. But this is also a beautiful time in Nicaragua with everything green and blooming.

## Electricity

Apartments and houses in the city are wired for 120 Volt and 60 Hertz. This is the same as in the US and adaptors are not necessary. Managua experiences frequent power outages. Power fluctuations and surges are also common. Surge protectors are vital for all electronic equipment. Be sure to bring it with you.

## Money

Almost all vendors in Nicaragua accept either Nicaraguan Córdobas or US dollars. Unlike other countries, vendors normally give a very fair exchange rate and sometimes US dollars are preferred. In fact, it is not uncommon for household staff to ask to be paid in US dollars instead of Nicaraguan Córdobas.

ATMs are widely available in Managua and generally safe. Withdrawals of either Nicaraguan Córdobas or US dollars are possible at every ATM. Fees might be assessed from your US bank and from the local ATM provider. USAA refunds up to \$15 in other banks' ATM fees and does not charge for the first 10 ATM transactions. Travelers checks are not accepted by local vendors nor will local banks cash them.

Banco LaFise cashes US dollar checks (for dollars or Nicaraguan Córdobas) drawn against US banks. There is no charge for this service. Banco LaFise will not cash third party checks. Be sure to have an ample supply of checks with you.

Credit cards are used at larger vendors and restaurants but caution is advised to watch your account for signs of fraud. Many vendors will charge a fee to pay with international credit cards and almost all credit card companies will charge a foreign transaction fee. Capital One has one card that does not charge foreign transaction fees, which may be beneficial for you. Local bank accounts, with debit cards, can be opened to facilitate payments for internet and cable (the company does not accept international credit cards).

## Shopping

There are many large and modern shopping malls in Managua which are similar to but not exactly like malls in the United States. All malls in Managua are outdoor (but covered). During the hottest months, malls are not a place to escape because they are not air conditioned!

Imported American products can be found at the local grocery stores, most of which are modern, clean and western in layout. A few specialty stores provide fresh beef, fish and specialty meats. PriceSmart, a Costco type membership-shopping warehouse, stocks many popular American items. Please note that PriceSmart does not accept any credit cards other than American Express. You may pay for your items with American Express or cash.

### THINGS YOU CAN BUY IN NICARAGUA

#### 1. Wicker Furniture

2. Inexpensive Paintings
3. Hammocks
4. Pottery
5. High Quality Cigars
6. Coffee
7. Hardwood Furniture
8. Leather Goods

Things you can get but they are EXPENSIVE

FOOD AND DRINK

- Most American products are more expensive
- Pet food (low quality)
- Apples and other imported fruits
- Some Asian ingredients (noodles, Panko and sauces)
- Peanut butter
- Some canned vegetables (artichokes, specialty items)
- Craisens (PriceSmart)
- Chicken broth (PriceSmart)
- Cereal like Honey bunches of Oats (best prices are at PriceSmart)
- Boxed cake mix (basic flavors) and frosting (usually only chocolate)
- Whole frozen Turkeys and spiral cut hams (PriceSmart and LaColonia)

Things you cannot find or are available sporadically

FOOD AND DRINK

- Organic products – this includes dairy and produce
- American and most European beer
- A large variety of wine
  - French, Italian, American and Australian wines are less common
  - Wines from Chile and Argentina are widely available
- American style corn meal
- Kosher salt
- High Quality flour
- Whole wheat flour in general
- Refined sugar
- Unsalted butter
- Fresh cranberries
- Crystal light
- Whole peppercorns to refill a grinder
- American style sour cream
- Cheerios – You can often find Chocolate Cheerios, Honey Nut Cheerios, and MultiGrain Cheerios. You can almost never find regular Cheerios in the yellow box.
- Raspberry jam
- Lemons (lemon juice from concentrate can be bought at PriceSmart)
- Grits
- Fresh olives

- Baby spinach
- Fresh whole turkeys for the holidays (you can find frozen turkeys at PriceSmart around Thanksgiving)
- Vanilla frosting (Can be found at Porta's occasionally)
- Food coloring
- Bulk dried fruit other than prunes and Craisens
- Grains like quinoa and bulgar
- Beef stock
- Chicken stock
- Many American and Asian spices
- Real vanilla and almond extracts